

March 1, 2013

The Honorable John Kline  
Chair, Committee on Education and the  
Workforce  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1210 Longworth HOB  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Virginia Foxx  
Chair, Subcommittee on Higher Education and  
the Workforce  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1230 Longworth HOB  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Kline and Chairwoman Foxx,

On behalf of the U.S. Conference of Mayors (USCM), the National Association of Counties (NACo), the National League of Cities (NLC), the National Association of Workforce Boards (NAWB) and our respective national membership of local elected officials, business leaders, and workforce investment boards, we commend your leadership and continued work toward reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) with the introduction of H.R. 803 "Supporting Knowledge and Investing in Lifelong Skills (SKILLS) Act."

America's counties, cities and towns have the potential to be the engines of full national economic recovery and growth; and there is nothing more important to local elected officials, business leaders and workforce investment boards than building successful workforce systems to support the individuals in our communities develop the necessary skills for the jobs of the future. There is no debate that we need a strong and modernized workforce development system, and we strongly support efforts to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the nation's workforce development system. Reauthorization of WIA provides an obvious opportunity to make needed improvements to our nation's workforce development system. Such changes should support innovation and flexibility at the local level, and promote an agenda of smart, sustainable investments in the nation's workforce. This is the way to put us on a solid path to economic recovery.

WIA envisioned a strong role for local stakeholders in the administration of workforce development activities, and we are deeply concerned that H.R. 803 dilutes that role. It eliminates prior provisions relating to automatic designation of local workforce development areas, effectively allowing state boards to designate local areas in consultation with the governor, without considering sufficient input from the local level promoting local needs. We acknowledge the criteria stated in Section 105 that references the

considerations of; extent to which such local areas are consistent with labor market areas, the alignment with economic development regions, the capacity of an area regarding education and training providers, and the distance individuals must travel for services. Our concerns are rooted in the belief that Congress should establish a system whereby local area designations result from collaboration between local elected officials and governors, in a way that reflects labor market areas, regional economies and political boundaries. Such a balanced approach is critical if we are to develop a workforce development system that fully reflects local and regional economies, and is responsive to the needs of our citizens, businesses, and industries.

While systemic improvements must be made to WIA programs to increase investments in quality services, resources and workforce education, we believe these goals can and should be achieved in a workforce system that continues to be governed and led by locally based, business-led Workforce Boards, in partnership with state and local governments, as originally established by WIA. Maintaining the current governance structure as set forth under WIA will minimize any negative impacts on workforce development efforts at the state and local level and preserve local workforce development systems that have a history of effective workforce education and placement activities, regardless of population.

We firmly believe that WIA reauthorization presents an opportunity to encourage collaborative partnerships at the local and regional level to leverage the existing infrastructure, expertise and resources of current WIA service providers and stakeholders, without siphoning off critical resources to build and implement a new workforce system. As a nation we must raise the expectations and capacity of the nation's workforce system to act as a mechanism for change and encourage partnerships between local and state workforce boards, businesses, and community colleges.

We strongly support enactment of a bi-partisan workforce development bill that is responsive to emerging economic realities and business needs. The reauthorization of WIA is essential for preservation of critical workforce development funding, and a most important investment in our nation's economic future. We thank you for your commitment to these issues, and look forward to working with you as you move this vital legislation forward.

Sincerely,



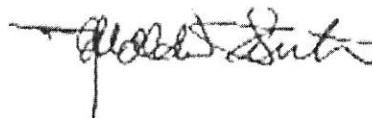
Tom Cochran  
CEO and Executive Director  
The U.S. Conference of Mayors



Matthew D. Chase  
Executive Director  
National Association of Counties



Clarence Anthony  
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National League of Cities



Ron Painter  
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